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STATEMENT OF
M. RUPERT CUTLER, ASSISTANT SECRETARY
FOR CONSERVATION, RESEARCH, AND EDUCATION
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Before the Senate Subcommittee on Parks, Recreation, and Renewable
Resources of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

On S. 95, S. 96, and S. 97 concerning the establishment of a
River of No Return Wilderness

June 22, 1979

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

I am pleased to have this opportunity to review with you the
Administration's recommendations for a River of No Return Wilderness
and a Salmon Wild and Scenic River in the State of Idaho.

The River of No Return Wilderness, if established in accordance
with the Administration's recommendation, would be one of the largest
wildernesses in the United States, outside of Alaska. This large expanse
of spectacular wild country is a remnant of the vast western wilderness
explored by Lewis and Clark in 1805 and contains rugged, scenic, mountainous
areas with towering peaks and deep canyons. Its variety of plants, mammals,
birds, fish, streams, lakes, topography, and scenery is unequalled.
Among many other attributes, the area contains approximately 190 wildlife
species, including a large cougar population which was the subject of a
nationally significant study. It also contains one of the most significant
rocky mountain bighorn sheep populations in the United States. This area
will be a truly outstanding addition to the Wilderness System.

I understand that at the recent field hearings in Lewiston, Salmon,
and Boise, Idaho, you heard considerable discussion of S. 95, the proposal
to designate a wilderness of 2.3 million acres, and of S. 96, an alternative

proposal which would establish a wilderness of 1.3 million acres and provide for additional wilderness study and multiple-use management designations.

I will concentrate my presentation on the background, the basis for, and the present status of the Administration's recommendations involving the proposed River of No Return Wilderness and the Salmon Wild and Scenic River.

Before I do this, I would like to provide the Committee with a perspective of how this area relates to existing wilderness areas in the State and the areas that were identified in the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE II).

(DISPLAY #1) - The first display contains two maps of Idaho, side by side, which show the existing wilderness areas and the RARE II areas. The inventory map on the left shows the existing wilderness in yellow. The blue illustrates primitive areas, and the roadless areas inventoried and analyzed in RARE II for potential wilderness designation. The blue areas on the map to the right illustrates the areas recommended by the Administration for inclusion in the Wilderness System. The orange areas represent those areas identified for further planning and the dark green the nonwilderness areas which are available for uses other than wilderness.

(DISPLAY #2) - This is an overhead transparency of Idaho showing the relationship of the proposed River of No Return Wilderness to other existing wilderness areas in Idaho and its location in the State.

The 1964 Wilderness Act directed the Secretary of Agriculture to study the Primitive Areas in the National Forest System for their wilderness suitability and to report the findings to the Congress within 10 years. In December of 1974, the President reported on the study of the Idaho and Salmon River Breaks Primitive Areas. He recommended to Congress the establishment of an Idaho Wilderness and a Salmon River Wilderness, having a combined area of 1,143,487 National Forest acres (DISPLAY #3).

The Congress did not complete action on the recommendation at that time. In May of 1977, President Carter informed the 95th Congress that he intended to enlarge the Idaho and Salmon River Wilderness proposals. Shortly after that, the USDA embarked on the RARE II effort. Within the Administration there was discussion as to whether a revised wilderness proposal for the "River of No Return" should be sent to the Congress before completion of RARE II. Based on the apparent high interest, including possible congressional action, we sent forward in December of 1978 a proposal for a River of No Return Wilderness consisting of 1,889,288 acres. This recommendation subsequently was introduced as S. 97 (DISPLAY #4). Because the scheduled completion of the RARE II study was only a few months away at that time, there was every expectation that the President's wilderness recommendations, evolving from RARE II, might modify his December 1978 proposal.

We now recommend a change in the Administration's December 1978 proposal for a 1,889,288-acre River of No Return Wilderness by adding to it approximately 283,720 acres of contiguous, roadless areas that were inventoried and evaluated in RARE II. The RARE II areas comprising

this acreage are the Gospel Hump area (45,377 acres), the Sulphur area (127,541 acres), the Camas Creek area (83,316 acres), and the McEleny area, (27,486 acres), as shown on the map outside of the green colored area. Our revised recommended acreage for the proposed River of No Return Wilderness totals 2,173,000 National Forest acres.

The lands within the proposed River of No Return Wilderness are federally-owned, with the exception of 6,921 acres of State lands and 2,447 acres of private lands. Although a variety of improvements such as cabins, lodges, resorts, educational facilities, and airstrips are located on Federal, State or private lands in the proposal area, they are widely dispersed and the impact of their presence is minimized by the rugged topography and large size of the proposed wilderness.

We believe that the provisions of the Wilderness Act concerning continuation of valid existing rights, uses and commercial services, State jurisdiction over fish and wildlife, and the application of the United States mining and mineral leasing laws until December 31, 1983, are fully adequate to protect the wilderness values of the proposed River of No Return Wilderness.

To give you some idea of how our proposal compares to the other two proposals, S. 96 and S. 95:

(DISPLAY #5) - The area proposed for wilderness in S. 96 is represented here by the blue overlay. The size of the area is 1,290,000 acres.

(DISPLAY #6) - S. 95 is represented here in red. It includes an area of 2,300,000 acres. The crosshatched areas represent the areas included in this proposal which are not included in

the revised Administration proposal. Two areas included in our proposal that are not in S. 95 are the Gospel Hump area and the Hells Half-Acre area.

The draft bill, attached to my printed testimony, reflects the Administration's recommendation and is offered for your use as an amendment in the form of a substitute for S. 97.

Also included in the draft bill is a provision to designate a segment of the Salmon River as a component of the National Wild and Scenic River System as recommended in our 1977 report on the River (DISPLAY #7). The gorge formed by the main Salmon River constitutes the second deepest gorge on the North American Continent. It is exceeded in depth only by the Seven Devils Canyon in the Snake River.

The main Salmon River would divide the proposed River of No Return Wilderness and would be contiguous to, but separate from the wilderness. We favor administration of the main Salmon River under the provisions of the Wild and Scenic River Act, rather than as part of the wilderness, so as to permit continuation, as appropriate, of motorized travel on the river and outfitter and developed camping facilities within the river corridor. This method of travel and these facilities are needed to support a major existing recreational use of the river.

The Middle Fork of the Salmon River would be included in the proposed wilderness area (DISPLAY #7). This River is already in the National Wild and Scenic River System and is known for its float-boating and fishing opportunities. We propose that administration of the Middle Fork of the Salmon River be under both the Wilderness

Act and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act so that the more restrictive provisions of the two acts would apply as provided by section 10(b) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. We have interpreted that section as providing maximum Federal authority to protect the natural values of the River, including both (1) the acquisition of private lands, and scenic easements and (2) the prohibition of nonwilderness-type uses within the Wild and Scenic River corridor pursuant to section 4 of the Wilderness Act. Both authorities are needed on the Middle Fork to preserve and protect the existing wilderness values of the river.

The revised proposal reflects a balance between wilderness necessary to help round out a quality wilderness preservation system and the consideration of other resource values essential to the well-being of local and regional economies. The major costs associated with the proposal are in commodity values foregone. Foregone values include the utilization of timber, the opportunity to increase water, wildlife, or domestic livestock forage through vegetative management, the production of hydroelectric power and minerals, and the improvement of surface access through road construction. We have concluded, however, that the wilderness and wild and scenic river values outweigh the other values. There is no question that the area will be an outstanding addition to the National Wilderness Preservation System and the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. It is estimated that approximately \$22 million is needed for

acquisition of land, or interests in lands along the proposed Salmon Wild and Scenic River. This estimate is based on recent transaction evidence and appraisals in this and adjoining areas and is substantially higher than our original estimate of 6.2 million as contained in our 1977 report.

This concludes my prepared statement, Mr. Chairman. I will be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

A B I L L

To designate the River of No Return Wilderness, on the Bitterroot, Boise, Challis, Nezperce, Payette, and Salmon National Forests, and the Salmon Wild and Scenic River, both in the State of Idaho

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That:

TITLE I

DESIGNATION OF THE RIVER OF NO RETURN WILDERNESS

SEC. 101. In accordance with subsection 3(b) of the Wilderness Act (78 Stat. 891, 16 U.S.C. 1132(b)), the areas classified as the Idaho and Salmon River Breaks Primitive Areas, with the proposed additions thereto and proposed deletions therefrom, as generally depicted on a map entitled "River of No Return Wilderness (Proposed)", dated April 1979, which is on file and available for public inspection in the office of the Chief, Forest Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, are hereby designated as the River of No Return Wilderness (approximately 2,173,00 National Forest System acres), and therefore, as a component of the National Wilderness Preservation System, within and as part of the Bitterroot, Boise, Challis, Nezperce, Payette, and Salmon National Forests in Idaho. The previous classification of the Idaho and Salmon River Breaks Primitive Areas is hereby abolished.

SEC. 102. As soon as practicable after this Act takes effect, the Secretary of Agriculture shall file a map and legal description of the River of No return Wilderness with the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, United States Senate, and the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, House of Representatives, and such description shall have the

same force and effect as if included in this Act: Provided, however, that correction of clerical and typographical errors in such legal description and map may be made.

SEC. 103. The River of No Return Wilderness shall be administered by the Secretary of Agriculture in accordance with the provisions of the Wilderness Act except that any reference in such provisions to the effective date of the Wilderness Act shall with regard to this Wilderness be deemed to be a reference to the effective date of this Act.

TITLE II

DESIGNATION OF THE SALMON WILD AND SCENIC RIVER

SEC. 201. Section 3(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (82 Stat. 906 as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1274 et seq.), is further amended by adding the following new paragraph at the end thereof:

"Salmon, Idaho--The Segment from the mouth of the North Fork of the Salmon River to its confluence with the Snake River as generally depicted on a map entitled 'Salmon River Study' dated July 1976, which is on file and available for public inspection in the office of the Chief, Forest Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, and is also part of a report entitled 'A Proposal for the Salmon River, Idaho', that portion from the Nezperce National Forest boundary, near the town of Riggins, downstream to the Snake River to be administered by the Secretary of the Interior, and all other portions to be administered by the Secretary of Agriculture: Provided, That the Secretaries shall take such action as is required by section 3(b) within one .

year from the date of enactment of this paragraph: Provided, further, That nothing in this paragraph shall impair or otherwise affect the statutory authority vested in the Secretary of the Department in which the Coast Guard is operating to achieve its assigned missions, including aids to navigation, search and rescue, marine environmental protection, and recreational boating safety; and Provided, further, That for the purposes of this river, there are authorized to be appropriated not more than \$22,000,000 for the acquisition of lands and interest in lands."

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